

A Parent's Guide for Increasing Your Child's Vocabulary

- Why do I need to work on my child's vocabulary?
 - Many children with language disorders understand and use fewer words as compared to other children their age (i.e., they have a limited vocabulary).
 - A good vocabulary is needed to be able to communicate needs and ideas.
 - Therefore, improving vocabulary is an important language goal.

- Some thoughts about teaching your child new words:
 - New words are learned best when the object is present or when the word is of use or fun to your child.

 - Be sure to teach your child lots of different types of words [e.g., action words (i.e., verbs), descriptive words (i.e., adjectives and adverbs), and location words (i.e., prepositions), etc.], as well as the names of objects.

 - A new word should be introduced on its own or in a simple sentence.

 - Emphasize the new word by saying it a little louder and a little slower than the other words.

 - Children tend to learn words in a particular pattern:
 - General terms are learned before specific items ("big" versus "gigantic" or "huge").
 - Concrete terms are learned before more abstract terms ("ball" versus "blue").
 - Names of things they can touch are learned before those of things they cannot ("cookie" versus "soft").

 - Children must understand the concept before a new word can have meaning
 - A child must understand the concept of "colour" before he can be expected to learn the colour label "blue".
 - You can check for understanding by asking him to find the blue car when you ask for it.
 - Once he can do this, he will eventually be able to start saying "blue."

 - What children understand a word to mean may be different from the adult's understanding. This understanding will get better over time, with more experience.